

## Philosophy 50118

# Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

## Syllabus

### Course Description

The course will be devoted to a careful reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and an examination of some of the central disputes in the secondary literature concerning it, with special attention to the so-called "resolute" or "austere" reading of the *Tractatus*. The aim will be to provide an overview of the philosophy of the early Wittgenstein, with special attention to the critiques of Frege and Russell, the structure and the method of the *Tractatus* as a whole, and especially some of the most hotly debated exegetical controversies recently surrounding the work. Some attention will also be given, especially at the end of the course, to the topic of the relation between the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's later work.

### The Structure of the Seminar

Some prior background in the history of analytic philosophy is desirable. The seminar is open to all, but intended primarily for graduate students in Philosophy. It will be taught with this latter constituency in mind as the primary audience. Some effort will be made in the opening weeks to introduce students to some of the basic background and central issues, and to point students who require orientation in these towards helpful secondary literature. Accordingly, anyone may audit the course, as long as they understand that the bulk of it will be taught at an advanced level. The first half of the course will be conducted primarily in a lecture format; and the second half primarily in a discussion format.

### Course Requirements

The sole course requirement is a seminar-length (i.e., 15 to 30 page) paper due at the end of the Spring Quarter.

## Required Texts and Readings

This course is intended to be as much an introduction to contemporary scholarship on the *Tractatus* as to the *Tractatus* itself. The current literature on the subject is massive, and students taking the course for credit will be expected to orient themselves in it, and thus to read beyond the merely required readings for the course. Nonetheless, we must begin somewhere.

The following five texts have been ordered for the course and are available at the Seminary Co-op:

1. G. E. M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*
2. Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*
3. Roger M. White, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks: 1914-16*
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by C. K. Ogden, bi-lingual edition

The rest of the readings will be available through the seminar's Chalk website. The readings for each week divide into required readings and background reading. Students taking the course for credit are expected to do the all of required reading. The background readings are optional.

Students will be expected to be studying the text of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* every week of the course. Hence readings from portions of it will not be assigned on any particular week.

The following seven texts have *not* been ordered for the course, but may be of interest to students in the course and are thus worthy of special mention:

1. H. O. Mounce, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction*
2. *The New Wittgenstein*, edited by Alice Crary and Rupert Read
3. *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life*, edited by Alice Crary
4. *From Frege to Wittgenstein*, edited by Erich Reck
5. *Wittgenstein's Lasting Influence*, edited by Max Koelbel and Bernhard Weiss
6. Marie McGinn, *Elucidating the Tractatus*
7. Eli Friedlander, *Signs of Sense: Readings Wittgenstein's Tractatus*

The first three of these are in paperback and comparatively affordable; the last four are not. The first one is a good early introduction to the *Tractatus*. Each of the last two books above represents a recent interesting attempt to offer a definitive interpretation in the wake of the scholarly controversies about how to read the text that we will be exploring in this course. The other four are collections of essays from which, in each case, at least three essays will be assigned for this course (and made available through the Chalk site), while many of the other essays in each of these collections are also relevant to the topics of the course.

A full bibliography of readings relevant to the course will be made available in the third week of the course.

# Schedule of Readings

## 01/08 (1<sup>st</sup> week) Introduction to the Seminar

Required reading (for this week and every week!):

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

## 01/15 (2<sup>nd</sup> week) The Russellian Background

Required readings:

Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, §§46-55

Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 12

Bertrand Russell, *Theory of Knowledge*, Part I, Chapter 9 (“Logical Data”)

Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Lectures 1 - 3

Background readings:

Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, §§481-483

Bertrand Russell, “On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood”

Bertrand Russell, “What is Logic?” [1912]

Peter Hylton, “The Nature of the Proposition and the Revolt Against Idealism”

Peter Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, pp. 333-361

## 01/22 (3<sup>rd</sup> week) The Fregean Background

Required readings:

Gottlob Frege, “On Concept and Object”

Gottlob Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, Preface

Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Introduction

Gottlob Frege, *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, Introduction

Background reading:

Joan Weiner, *Frege in Perspective*, Chapter 6

Cora Diamond, “Frege and Nonsense”

Cora Diamond, “What Does a Begriffsschrift Do?”

Thomas Ricketts, “Objectivity and Objecthood”

## 01/29 (4<sup>th</sup> week) Wittgenstein’s Inheritance of Certain Aspects of Frege’s Philosophy

Required readings:

Peter Geach, “Frege and Early Wittgenstein on Saying and Showing”

Cora Diamond, “What Nonsense Might Be”

Background readings:

Thomas Ricketts, "Frege, the Tractatus, and the Logocentric Predicament"  
Cora Diamond, "Inheriting from Frege: The Work of Reception, as Wittgenstein Did It"  
Warren Goldfarb, "Wittgenstein's Understanding of Frege"

### **02/05 (5<sup>th</sup> week) Some Problems with the Standard Reading of the Tractatus**

Required readings:

Peter Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Chapter 1  
Rudolf Carnap, "On the Elimination of Metaphysics by Means of the Logical Analysis of Language"

Background readings:

Norman Malcolm, *Nothing is Hidden*, Chapters 1 - 3  
David Pears, *The False Prison*, Chapters 4 and 5

### **02/12 (6<sup>th</sup> week) Early Wittgenstein contra Russell & Throwing Away the Ladder**

Required readings:

Brian McGuinness, "The Supposed Realism of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*"  
Cora Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder"  
Thomas Ricketts, "Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*"

Background readings:

Hide Ishiguro, "Use and Reference of Names"  
Anthony Palmer, "The Complex Problem and the Theory of Symbolism"  
Cora Diamond, "Does Bismark Have a Beetle in His Box?"  
Thomas Ricketts, "Wittgenstein Against Frege and Russell"

### **02/19 (7<sup>th</sup> week) On the Concept of a Resolute Reading of the Tractatus**

Required readings:

Cora Diamond, "Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of the *Tractatus*"  
Warren Goldfarb, "Metaphysics and Nonsense"  
Cora Diamond, "Realism and Resolution"  
Peter Sullivan, "On Trying to Be Resolute"

Background readings:

Michael Kremer, "The Purpose of Tractarian Nonsense"  
Warren Goldfarb, "Das Überwinden"  
Adrian Moore and Peter Sullivan, "Ineffability and Nonsense"

Marie McGinn, "Between Metaphysics and Nonsense: The Role of Elucidation in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*"

### **02/26 (8<sup>th</sup> week) Some Typical Criticisms of Resolute Readings**

Required readings:

Peter Hacker, "Was He Trying to Whistle It?"  
Meredith Williams: "Nonsense and Cosmic Exile"  
Peter Hacker, "Wittgenstein, Carnap, and the New American Wittgensteinians"  
Cora Diamond, "Wittgenstein and Logical Syntax"

Background readings:

Hans-Johann Glock, "All Kinds of Nonsense"  
Edmund Dain, "Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*"  
Peter Hacker, "When the Whistling Had to Stop"  
Peter Hacker, "Interview with Edward Kanterian"

### **03/4 (9<sup>th</sup> week) Roger White's Criticisms of Resolute Readings**

Required readings:

Roger White, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, selections  
Roger White, "Throwing the Baby Out with the Ladder"

Background reading:

Roger White: *The Structure of Metaphor*, selections

### **03/11 (10<sup>th</sup> week) The Relation Between Early and Later Wittgenstein**

Required readings:

Cora Diamond, "Wittgenstein and Metaphysics"  
Ian Proops, "The New Wittgenstein: A Critique"  
Oskari Kuusela, "From Metaphysics and Philosophical Theses to Grammar"  
Cora Diamond, "Criss-Cross Philosophy"

Background readings:

Juliet Floyd, "Numbers and Ascriptions of Number in the *Tractatus*"  
Rupert Read and Rob Deans, "Nothing is Shown"  
Oskari Kuusela, "Wittgenstein on Philosophical Problems"  
Marie McGinn, *Elucidating the Tractatus*, Chapter 12